

MONDAY MANNA

30 December 2019

ONE THING WE ALL COULD USE IN THE NEW YEAR

by Robert J. Tamasy

All around the world, clocks and calendars are counting down. By this time next week, we will have entered another year, either bidding a fond farewell to the year just passed or simply saying, "Good riddance!" Each new year represents an opportunity for a fresh start. If the past year was a successful one, it is a chance to build on that success. If not, we can resolve to fix what was broken.

Since we only get one shot at each new year, we typically seek to maximise the "newness" by reflecting on the past, taking a deep breath, and then plunging into whatever the next year has to offer. With that in mind, if you were to identify the most important things you hope to achieve during the coming year, what would they be? Greater profits? A long-awaited promotion? A job change?

One thing many of us might not include on such a list is *peace*. Not world peace, since that is something we have little if any control over. Living in a world filled with turmoil and chaos, it seems unlikely that will change anytime soon. But amid the continual upheaval that surrounds us, is it possible to attain inner peace that external circumstances cannot touch?

In search of this, some turn to spiritual alternatives, such as meditation or mysticism. Blocking out the external, physical world to cultivate our internal, spiritual selves. There are many books, websites and workshops for those who choose such options. These may be helpful, to one degree or another.

However, there is one time-tested, enduring source of peace that countless millions of people through the centuries have found for connecting both the spiritual and the physical worlds in which they live. Here are some of the many peace-giving promises we find in the Bible:

Peace through Jesus Christ. The Scriptures called Jesus the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Nearing the conclusion of His earthly ministry, Jesus promised to give them a kind of peace unlike anything they had ever experienced. *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"* (John 14:27).

Peace beyond all human comprehension. Sometimes the challenges and hardships of everyday living seem without solution. How can we experience peace when enduring such difficult times? The apostle Paul, no stranger to adversity, offered this assurance for followers of Jesus: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:6-7).

Peace in the midst of trials. We often regain a sense of peace when difficulties subside, but Jesus promised His followers they could enjoy peace in the midst of them. *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world"* (John 16:33).

Peace: a promise, and a command. Those of who profess faith in Christ are instructed not only to believe assurances of peace, but also to act on those promises. *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace"* (Colossians 3:15).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

How would you define "peace"? What does it look like or feel like when you are experiencing peace in your life, even if it is momentary?

In your opinion, why is peace such an elusive quality in our world today? Do you think the hope of having true inner peace that transcends external circumstances is realistic? Why or why not?

Have you ever experienced a time of unusual inner peace despite extremely difficult trials you had encountered in your life? If so, describe what that was like for you.

Does the idea of having a sense of peace in the marketplace differ from the kind of peace you can experience in one's personal life, apart from work responsibilities? Explain your answer.

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more consider the following passages:

Psalm 23:1-6, 29:10-11

John 20:21

Romans 15:13

Galatians 5:22-23

Ephesians 2:11-18